**2019-2020 Annual Program Assessment Report Guide**

Please submit your report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean and Dean of your College, and to [james.solomon@csun.edu](mailto:james.solomon@csun.edu), Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by **September 30, 2020**. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. **Please include this form with your report in the same file and identify your department/program in the file name. Please do not change the date on the form, and be sure to check that your report is ADA accessible.**

**College: Arts, Media, and Communication**

**Department: Communication Studies**

**Program: MA, Communication Studies**

**Assessment liaison: David Keating**

1. **Please check off whichever is applicable:**

**A. \_\_\_X\_\_\_\_ Measured student work within program major/options.**

**B. \_\_\_X\_\_\_\_ Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.**

**C. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.**

**D. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Participated in the 2019-20 assessment of General Education Section D: Social Sciences and U.S. History and Government student learning outcomes**

1. **Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s).** On a separate sheet,provide a brief overview of this year’s assessment activities, including:

* an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, application, or GE assessment) that it enacted
* if your department implemented assessment **option A**, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year’s measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
* if your department implemented assessment **option B**, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year’s analyses and past and future assessment activities
* if your department implemented **option C**, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
* if your program implemented **option D**, exclusively or simultaneously with **options** **A, B, and/or C**, identify the GE learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
* in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university’s commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
* any other assessment-related information you wish to include: e.g. SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes) and the creation or modification of new assessment instruments

1. **Preview of planned assessment activities for 2020-21.** Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

***Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s)***

The Department of Communication Studies focused on assessing two program student learning outcomes (PSLOs) in our MA program.

Our current MA PSLOs include the following:

1. Critically examine how communication affects the social construction of reality.
2. Define and discuss some basic tenets or theories of human communication from the perspective of one or more specific areas of the field.
3. Critically assess and analyze scholarly writing in the field.
4. Analyze and critically interpret/evaluate communication practices and research.
5. Analyze and critically evaluate the relationship between communication and culture.

**An explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, and/or application) that it enacted**

The MA in Communication Studies has five total PSLOs. Two had not been assessed in the last 10 years; therefore, we prioritized assessing them. In addition to addressing a much needed area of assessment, evaluating these two MA PSLOs may additionally help to inform how we revise the MA PSLOs in the future. During AY 2018-2019, the Department implemented revised PSLOs to the B.A. program. Moving forward, the Department plans to similarly revise the MA PSLOs.

We decided to assess student work in our two core MA classes that all first-year MA students are required to take. We both measured (option A) and analyzed (option B) student work in the core course taken in Fall and the core course taken in Spring. This approach allowed us to examine each class individually as well as change across the academic year.

**If your department implemented assessment option A, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year’s measure of student work and that of past years**

We assessed two of the PSLOs in MA program in communication studies.

Specifically, we assessed MA PSLO2 and MA PSLO3.

MA PSLO2: Define and discuss some basic tenets or theories of human communication from the perspective of one or more specific areas of the field.

MA PSLO3: Critically assess and analyze scholarly writing in the field.

***Assignments to be Assessed:***We assessed a major assignment in two classes, each of which is a core requirement for first-year MA students. The first piece of student work that we assessed was a major assignment in COMS 600: Core Seminar in Communication. This assignment called for students to create annotated bibliographies for 15 pieces of scholarly work (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles; book chapters). Among other things, for each entry, students were required to write a description of each work’s purpose, arguments or rationale, methods and analyses (if any), and significance (approximately 150 words each). The second piece of student work was a major assignment in COMS 601: Core Seminar in Communication Research Methods. This assignment called for students to identify an empirical research article, carefully review it, and write an extended abstract (approximately two pages). In the abstract, students were required to summarize the study’s rationale, including its research questions and predictions, as well as the study’s methods, results, and implications.

***Assessment Focus:***We assessed MA PSLO2 and PSLO3 by reviewing every piece of student work. The completed assignments were obtained from the instructors. We assessed every piece of completed student work. During our evaluations, we focused on two dimensions for each PSLO (see the assessment rubric in the Appendix). For PSLO2, we evaluated each piece of student work based on how well it clearly, completely, and accurately described and defined important concepts (*definition*); and how clearly and coherently it reviewed philosophical and/or theoretical ideas in the field (*discussion*). For PSLO3, we evaluated how well each piece of work examined and synthesized research (*assessment*); and how well it effectively deconstructed and evaluated research (*analysis*). The four members of the assessment committee independently evaluated student work on these dimensions using a four-point scale system. We made a decision to rate work in 0.5 increments. Ratings of 3 or 4 indicated “satisfactory” or “exceptional” work, respectively; thus, these ratings represented instances in which student work met or exceeded expectations for each PSLO.

**If your department implemented assessment option B, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year’s analyses and past and future assessment activities**

We anonymized student work and evaluated each piece in isolation. This included 11 students in COMS 600 and 10 students in COMS 601. We then matched the 10 students who completed each assignment across the two courses. Below, we give specific details about how we analyzed student work and what we found.

***Assessment Analysis:***The assessment team’s analysis took place in two phases for each assignment. In the first phase, we engaged in preliminary application of our assessment rubric in order to achieve consistency across raters. As part of this, we independently examined work from two randomly selected students. Following this, the assessment liaison compared ratings and identified inconsistencies, and the full assessment team then discussed the disagreements, including why they occurred and how to increase consistency. The goal of this phase was to ensure each member of the assessment team was applying the assessment rubric similarly. In the second phase, we engaged in the final assessment of student work. Specifically, each member of the assessment team independently applied the assessment rubric to every piece of student work. The assessment liaison then examined the ratings and used them to derive a final overall rating for each piece of student work; the ratings of the four assessment committee members were averaged to create the overall rating.

***Assessment Results:***The assessment ratings for the first major assignment in COMS 600, which is a Fall semester class, indicated that the majority of student work fell below “satisfactory” or “exceptional” levels. For the *definition* dimension of MA PSLO2 (range: 1.6-3.0; average: 2.2), only about 9% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level; the vast majority, about 73%, fell into the “approaching competence” range. Similarly, for the *discussion* dimension of MA PSLO2 (range: 1.8-3.4; average: 2.4), about 18% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level; a plurality of students, about 46%, fell into the approaching competence range. For the *assessment* dimension of MA PSLO3 (range: 1.4-3.3; average: 2.1), about 18% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level; unfortunately, a plurality of students, about 46%, were in the “minimal competence” range. For the *analysis* dimension of MA PSLO3 (range: 1.5-2.8; average: 2.0), no student reached the satisfactory/exceptional level; a slight majority of students, about 55%, fell into the approaching competence range.

The assessment ratings for the second major assignment in COMS 601, which is a Spring semester class, indicated that students improved over the course of the academic year. However, the majority of student work still fell below the satisfactory/exceptional level. For the *definition* dimension of MA PSLO2 (range: 1.6-3.1; average: 2.8), 30% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level; the majority fell into the approaching competence range. For the *discussion* dimension of MA PSLO2 (range: 1.9-3.3; average: 2.8), 40% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level, and 50% fell into the approaching competence range. For the *assessment* dimension of MA PSLO3 (range: 1.9-3.3; average: 2.7), only 10% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level, and 80% fell into the approaching competence range. For the *analysis* dimension of MA PSLO3 (range: 2.0-3.0; average: 2.4), only 10% of students reached the satisfactory/exceptional level, and the remaining fell into the approaching competence range.

Quite encouragingly, among the 10 students who completed both assignments, work improved on each dimension across the two assignments. In our ratings for MA PSLO2, the average increase across the two semesters was 0.5 points on the *definition* dimension and 0.4 points on the *discussion* dimension. Similarly, in our ratings for MA PSLO3, the average increase was 0.5 points on the *assessment* dimension and 0.4 points on the *analysis* dimension.

Altogether, our results suggest that the Department needs to make admissions, curricular, and/or pedagogical changes in order to better help students meet MA PSLO2 and MA PSLO3. At the same time, the Department is doing quite a good job at helping students make gains on each of the MA PSLOs we assessed.

**In what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university’s commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups**

The Department’s MA program is made up of a particularly diverse group of students in terms of race/ethnicity and gender. Although we did not observe any obvious equity gaps in our assessment, the success of our MA program rests on the Department’s ability to support and lift up our students—especially those from underrepresented groups.

***Preview of Planned Assessment Activities for 2020-2021***

At present, our planned assessment activities for AY 20-21 include reviewing institutional data to identify potential program revision and professional development needs in future academic years. Anticipated cuts to Department resources from the University and College, including cutting course release time for the Department’s assessment liaison, substantially limit the Department’s ability—and, frankly, willingness—to enact a more comprehensive assessment plan in AY 20-21. Additionally, the Department cannot yet effectively plan until uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is reduced.

***Appendix C: Assignment Rubric***

**Broad Distinctions among Areas of the Field:**

* **Rhetoric:** study of speaker intent and rhetorical discourse in society
* **Communication Theory**: study of patterns of communicative behavior and why those patterns occur
* **Performance, Language, and Cultural Studies**: study of the production and reproduction of culture and social reality

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| Scoring Scale (1-4) | **PSLO2: Definition**  (def: the work clearly, completely, and accurately describes important concepts located in one or more areas of the field) | **PSLO2: Discussion**  (def: clear and coherent review of philosophical and/or theoretical ideas in one or more areas of the field) | **PSLO3: Assessment**  (def: thoughtful examination and synthesis of a body of work in one or more areas of the field) | **PSLO3: Analysis**  (def: effective interpretation, deconstruction, and/or evaluation of a body of work in one or more areas of the field) |
| Exceptional – 4 | **Exceptionally clear and accurate** written description of relevant concepts; concepts should be clearly and accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Exceptionally clear and coherent** review of philosophical/theoretical ideas; the reviewed ideas should be accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Exceptionally coherent and thoughtful** written discussion that effectively discusses a range of scholarly work and/or research. | **Exceptionally persuasive and appropriate** written analysis of the state and quality of a body of scholarly work and/or research. |
| SATISFACTORY – 3 | **Mostly clear and accurate** written description of relevant concepts; concepts should be accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Mostly clear and coherent** review of philosophical/theoretical ideas; the reviewed ideas should be accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Mostly coherent and thoughtful** written discussion that somewhat effectively discusses a range of scholarly work and/or research. | **Mostly persuasive and appropriate** written analysis of the state and quality of a body of scholarly work and/or research. |
| APPROACHING  COMPETENCE – 2 | **Somewhat clear and accurate** written description of relevant concepts; concepts are not accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Somewhat clear and coherent** review of philosophical/theoretical ideas; the reviewed ideas are not accurately linked to the relevant area(s) of the field. | **Somewhat coherent and thoughtful** written discussion of scholarly work and/or research; work summarizes a series of works rather than serving as a synthesis. | **Somewhat persuasive and appropriate** written analysis of the state and quality of a body of scholarly work and/or research. |
| MINIMAL COMPETENCE – 1 | **Minimal, unclear, and/or inaccurate** written description of concepts; concepts are not relevant or accurately linked to one or more areas of the field. | **Minimal, unclear, and/or incoherent** review of philosophical/theoretical ideas; the reviewed ideas are not relevant or accurately linked to one or more areas of the field. | **Minimal, incoherent, and/or inappropriate** written discussion of scholarly work and/or research; work summarizes a series of works rather than serving as a synthesis. | **Minimal, unpersuasive, and/or inappropriate** written analysis of the state and quality of a body of scholarly work and/or research. |

**COMS MA PSLOs:**

PSLO2: Define and discuss some basic tenets or theories of human communication from the perspective of one or more specific areas of the field.

PSLO3: Critically assess and analyze scholarly writing in the field.